
1. Skill

What Yanni Taught Me About Facilitation

Look everywhere for empowering metaphors

The Point

I attended a Yanni Concert in Las Vegas last weekend and was intrigued by how much I could learn about facilitation by watching this group's inspiring musical performance.

Empowerment. The first thing I noticed and appreciated was the fact that Yanni not only invites musicians into his group who perform at or beyond his own musical prowess, but he showcases them and encourages them with a sense of reverence and pride in "their" abilities. As the "leader" of the band, Yanni's music tends to take a back seat to the performers he highlights. He beams at them when they play, seemingly delighted in their abilities and the opportunity to show them off.

Orchestration. As a composer and arranger, Yanni obviously puts a great deal of preparation time into his band's performances. With around 25 members performing complex arrangements, with little if any visible cues, he obviously puts a lot of work into orchestrating this complex "process" performance in a fashion that appears seamless.

Embracing Diversity. I marvelled at the cultural diversity in his group. Many, many races, nationalities, and musical styles are represented, highlighted, and blended with exquisite taste and beauty. In his introductory words before one of his performances, he stated that they had assembled an miniature United Nations where each loves the music they are able to make through this mix while still loving their own cultures, countries, and roots. Through this music, diverse peoples come together to celebrate the beauty of their differences, while in the process, their performance is strengthened and enriched by them.

Use of Story. Several times during his performance, Yanni would tell a short story to paint a picture for us of the inspiration or the setting of the piece that was to follow. This helped to give the music more depth of meaning and caused me to listen more closely to nuances and how they may relate to my life. His use of story and humor enhanced my experience and interpretation of his music.

Innovation. It seems that though there are scores of people who reach a certain level of competence in a field, whether it's an aptitude in music, teaching, sports, or what have you, there are a certain few who reach just a little farther such that their work appears fresh, new, and above the fold. I thought about this as I listened to many of Yanni's star musicians. They somehow go a step further, or possibly surrender something within themselves, so that what comes through them has an uncommon aliveness and uniqueness that simply seems to bear the mark of not only mastery, but of regenerative, limitless innovation.

Application

Let's review how the elements of facilitation discussed above can be employed our groups.

Empowerment. Remember that the best facilitators, leaders, teachers, and coaches are those who lift up and encourage those whom they serve. Though you may be in front of the room, look for opportunities to surrender the lime light to your participants. See the group as theirs, and yourself as a catalyst for the realization of their competence, mastery, and greatness.

Orchestration. Plan well for your processes. Pay attention to not only the content you wish to deliver, and put extra effort into the design of processes, mood, interactions, logistics, and environment you wish to create to make it the most empowering and effective engagement possible.

Embracing Diversity. Embrace and encourage the voicing and expression of differences in your group. These

differences may take the form of race, culture, subculture, opinion, or beliefs. Know that only by creating a space where they may be respectfully voiced and heard will their harmonious integration be possible. Healthy integration of diversity will weave a fabric of strength and resiliency that will rival that of a homogenous group.

Use of Story. Encourage the use of short stories, music, or metaphor to illustrate and enhance the points being made. These forms of expression make our abstract thinking personal and easier for everyone to relate to and understand.

Innovation. Challenge yourself and those you work with to take that little extra effort to stretch just a little bit more to better express, create, or imagine that which you seek to attain as individuals or as a group. Imagine that the degree of quality you achieve corresponds to your level of willingness to stay with your process.

Ethnicity, by Yanni

Ethnicity finds Yanni exploring familiar thematic territory (diversity + harmony = international brotherhood) in search of fresh musical ideas. While ethnicity is the theme, the prevailing sound is contemporary and attractively rhythmic with modest world music and classical accents. Notable are Yanni's extensive use of female voices and the disc's vivid, sparkling production. Yanni offers an assortment of moods, from the celebratory, planetary-choir sound (think Adiemus) on "Rites of Passage" to pulsing, Deep Forest-like tribal chants, which sometimes click ("Tribal Dream") and sometimes seem forced, a little Yanni-come-lately ("Never Too Late"). High points are the didgeridoo-driven "Rainmaker" and the ethereal "At First Sight." Overall, the disc's sound tilts more toward the heroic than the romantic (a good trend), though some pieces (particularly his mini-operettas) seem overly polite and a little starched. Even so, Ethnicity is a compelling effort that indicates Yanni is, happily, keeping in touch with his more adventurous musical instincts.

About the Author

Steve Davis, M.A., M.S., is an Facilitator's Coach, Infoprenuer, and free-lance human, helping facilitators, organizational leaders, educators, trainers, coaches and consultants present themselves confidently, access their creativity, empower their under-performing groups, enhance their facilitation skills, and build their business online and offline. Does leading or participating in groups frustrate you? Subscribe to his free weekly ezine at www.MasterFacilitatorJournal.com and contact him [here](#) to schedule a free exploratory coaching session.